

Outdoor Play Adapting Ideas

All children enjoy playing outside. Often, people are not sure how to assist children with disabilities so that they are also enabled to play. This is a listing of some ideas. Please feel free to contact us with your ideas!

General Play Area

- ❖ The play area space should be contained so that the child can experiment with movement and work on proprioception (knowing where their body parts are in space). This is especially important, as children with Sensory Integration Dysfunction often do not understand the consequences of their actions.
- ❖ Having a fenced in area allows an adult to be watchful and available without clutching the child.
- ❖ It is important to give the child only as much support as they need but no more. For example, putting a cushion beneath the swings rather than hovering over the child when they use the swing.
- ❖ Put cushioning material underneath things such as a teeter-totter or swings. One choice is the Sof-Styles[®] foam mat puzzle pieces available at Home Depot for \$15. (You get four puzzle-type squares for a total area of 16 square feet.)
- ❖ Other options are tumbling mats from a sports store or Sammons Preston, or materials such as Sof'Fall[®] (<http://www.sof-fall.com/welcome.asp>)

Swings

- ❖ Use a sling-type swing so that it wraps around the child's seat.
- ❖ Make it into a chair swing by adding strong fabric on the back, or purchase one ready-made.
- ❖ Single-spring style swings for indoors or outdoors are available from Sammons Preston (800-323-5547 / <http://www.sammonspreston.com>)
- ❖ It's great for the child to use the swing by riding on their tummy.

- ❖ Use cushioning material underneath the swing.

Slides

- ❖ Use a cushioning material at the bottom of the slide.
- ❖ An adult may need to help out for a while until the child develops increased motor planning skills.
- ❖ Extending a slide can reduce its angle, or steepness.
- ❖ The edges of the slide can be made thicker for grasping ease by using foam pipe insulation.

Sensory Needs

- ❖ Make a sensory table. We have plans for how to make one using economical PVC pipe.
- ❖ Fidget toys such as Koosh[®] balls and water filled “jelly” toys.
- ❖ Hoppity-hop balls are great for using up energy and practicing balancing skills.
- ❖ Put weighted objects in toys such as wagons, shopping carts, or doll carriages. This gives the child a counterbalance as they move around the yard.
- ❖ Create a balance beam using pressure treated wood beams or landscaping beams.
- ❖ Use large appliance-type cartons to give them something to crawl in and out of, and practice awareness skills such as in and out, size of doorway, etc.
- ❖ Use beanbag chairs for sitting.

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